



# YOUTH LAW CENTER

**BI-ANNUAL  
REPORT  
2003-2004**

**The Youth Law Center** is a public interest law firm whose mission is to end abuse and maltreatment of children in the nation's juvenile justice and foster care systems, and ensure that these children are part of families and communities and receive the support and services they need to become healthy and productive adults. YLC engages in litigation; policy, administrative and legislative advocacy; training; technical assistance and public education to advance its mission.

The Youth Law Center is now in its 27th year of serving at-risk youth.

### **JUVENILE JUSTICE**

Juvenile and criminal justice systems hold children and youth accountable when they violate the law and harm others. The Youth Law Center holds juvenile justice systems accountable when they violate the law or cause harm to children and youth in their care.

### **FOSTER CARE**

Children's Services intervenes when parents abuse or neglect their children. The Youth Law Center intervenes when state systems abuse, neglect or abandon children in their custody.

### **COMMUNITIES**

Communities help youth and families to address their needs. The Youth Law Center helps communities to address the needs of their youth.

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## JUVENILE JUSTICE

### In 2003 and 2004, YLC:

- Ended the practice of incarcerating youth in 23-hour isolation in Los Angeles County's adult jail
- Advocated to end abuses in the California Youth Authority
- Worked to improve conditions in juvenile institutions in California, Ohio and New Mexico
- Reduced overcrowding and improved conditions in the nation's juvenile detention centers
- Identified and addressed the over representation of youth of color in the nation's juvenile justice systems
- Improved conditions and reduced overcrowding in Baltimore's juvenile justice institutions
- Advocated in Washington, D.C. to close the city's outmoded juvenile institution and instead develop community-based programs
- Sponsored legislation in California to reduce the number of young people serving time in adult prisons and to improve educational services to youth on probation



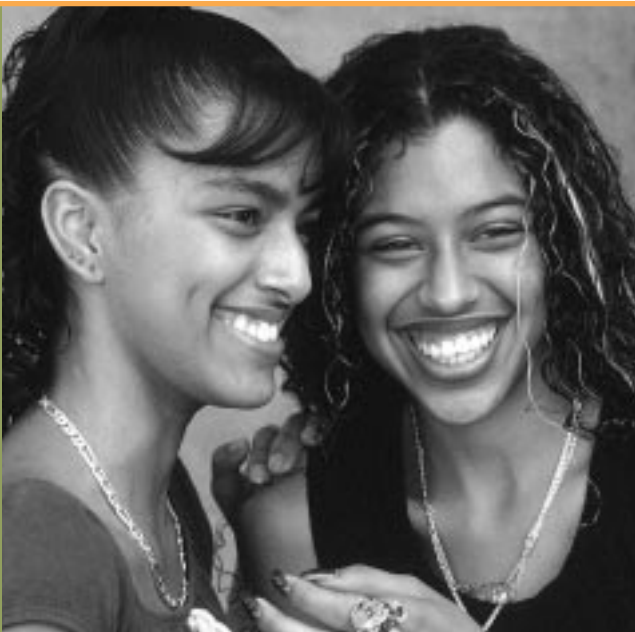
**Violence is common in juvenile institutions.** What makes Scioto Juvenile Correctional Facility for girls in Ohio unique is the fact that it is guards, not inmates, who are responsible for the criminal sexual and physical assaults. Abuse was so routine that guards publicly defended their right to curse at the girls and use force to make them cooperate. Equally disturbing, many of these girls came from Ohio's child protection system. Local advocates sought help from the Youth Law Center to end these abusive and illegal practices. In response to YLC's demands, the State hired experts to investigate conditions. These experts found an institution that was out of control. Worse, the agency had no plan to fix the problem and protect the girls. When negotiations failed to resolve the issue, YLC, with local advocates, filed a lawsuit. These initial advocacy efforts have already resulted in the resignation of the director of youth corrections, the firing of several guards, and changes in policy. But Scioto is still not a safe or appropriate place for young women. YLC continues to fight this case in order to achieve lasting change. *S.H. v. Taft*

**Youth awaiting trial in the Los Angeles County jail were subject to conditions more severe than those in the notorious “super max” prisons.** Although they had been convicted of nothing, they spent twenty-three hours a day in isolation with no instruction, fresh air or exercise. One man, Javier Stauring, a chaplain at the jail working with YLC, led a movement to bring this abuse to the attention of the public. As a result of his efforts, children were removed from the jail. But this success had a price. In retaliation for his public protest and communication with the media and public officials, the sheriff barred him from ministering to juveniles in the jail. When no local group would help him, the Youth Law Center, with attorneys from Pillsbury Winthrop, filed suit on his behalf to have him reinstated. Although YLC does not specialize in First Amendment issues, we know that unless insiders are willing to tell their stories, we will never be aware of abuses in jails, detention centers and foster care. We also know that his situation is not unique. Across the country volunteers fear to expose problems, lest they be prohibited from helping those who need them. In February 2005, the sheriff settled the case by restoring Javier's access to inmates and rescinding regulations that prohibited communication with the media. *Stauring v. Baca*

## FOSTER CARE

### In 2003 and 2004, YLC:

- Improved the treatment of infants and toddlers in the foster care system
- Forced the state of California to conduct safety inspections of relative foster homes as required by federal law
- Ended incarceration of delinquents who fled shelters and group homes
- Improved adoption subsidies and increased support for adoptive families
- Improved access to mental health treatment and education for foster youth
- Educated youth and their advocates on their legal rights while in care
- Sponsored legislation in California to enable foster teens to participate in decisions regarding their education



**In 2003, police arrested a young woman in Detroit for committing the "crime" of running away from a shelter where she was raped.** When her family called YLC, she had been locked up for a month and permitted no contact with family or friends. Investigation revealed that frustrated with the fact that the child welfare agency has lost almost 300 children in its custody, the juvenile court had issued an order for the arrest and detention of any child missing from foster care. YLC staff went to Michigan to persuade the court that there was a better way. We found a judge who was looking for help protecting children from the streets without violating their civil rights. A year later an on-going task force has developed new programs to serve these young people and monitor the care they receive in custody. Not only are children not incarcerated, they no longer need to runaway to get the help and protection they deserve.

### **In a 2003 drug raid, police in Los Angeles County found six children sharing a filthy one-room apartment with two adults.**

The officers were shocked to learn that two of the children were in the custody of child protective services and the home was an approved relative foster placement. Apparently the two social workers who had placed the children had neither visited the home nor talked to each other. The adults protested that they had told the agency that they couldn't safely care for these children, but the workers insisted. YLC staff investigated and found that this was just one of many cases in which foster care agencies in California placed children in relative care without reviewing the conditions of the home or helping relatives care for the children. With the help of Greenberg and Glusker, a prominent Los Angeles firm, the Youth Law Center sued Los Angeles County to require a system to ensure that relatives caring for children could provide safe appropriate homes. Although the case is still being litigated, the County has already changed its most dangerous policies by requiring criminal background checks and full inspections before a child is placed in a home. *Wheeler v. Sanders*

## COMMUNITIES

### In 2003 and 2004, YLC:

- Organized and supported Faith Communities for Families and Children, an inter-faith coalition of religious leaders in California and Michigan, to advocate for children in the foster care and juvenile justice systems
- Advocated to reduce unnecessary school suspensions and referrals to juvenile court in Kentucky, and identified a school program to serve as a statewide model
- Assisted agencies in Virginia and California to meet the special educational needs of children in foster care and children on probation
- Helped probation departments in California to ensure youth received necessary medical treatment
- Educated legal services providers in California about the rights of youth and families in the juvenile justice and foster care systems
- Supported a faith-based mentoring program for youth leaving the foster care system

### The school system in Richmond, Virginia, has a long history of failing to meet the needs of its students.

Foster children and youth in the juvenile justice system experience particular problems because they are moved frequently and are often without support in their homes. The Youth Law Center, with support from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, is working to remove the barriers to education for the vulnerable children in state care and custody. YLC worked with JustChildren, a local children's rights organization, to provide trainings on education rights of children to judges, Department of Social Services workers, school principals and parents. Juvenile court judges adopted a standing order, developed by YLC, to provide school records to advocates so that children no longer spend weeks out of school waiting for transcripts they need to enroll in new schools. Using new California legislation as a model, YLC developed legislation to ensure that foster youth will be enrolled in new schools immediately, without waiting for school records and other documents, and will have smoother educational transitions. The Virginia legislature's passage of this legislation in early 2005 was an important recognition by the state of the educational needs of these vulnerable youth.



## FINANCIAL REPORT

January 1, 2004 through December 31, 2004

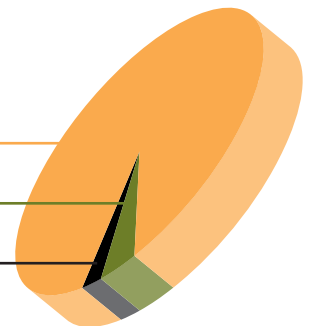
### INCOME

|  |                    |
|--|--------------------|
| Grants (Foundations, government)                   | \$1,772,232        |
| State Bar of California                            | 108,146            |
| Contributions (individuals, law firms, businesses) | 99,319             |
| Settlement Funds - Cy Pres                         | 200,310            |
| Interest   | 16,333             |
| Consultant Fees                                    | 16,000             |
| Other Income                                       | 2,428              |
| Subtotal   | 2,214,768          |
| Pass-through Funds                                 | 940,726            |
| <b>TOTAL INCOME</b>                                | <b>\$3,155,494</b> |

Program Services: 90%

Management & General: 6%

Fundraising: 4%



### EXPENSES

|                       |                    |
|-----------------------|--------------------|
| Program Services:     | 3,027,461          |
| Management & General: | 142,609            |
| Fundraising           | 85,123             |
| <b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b> | <b>\$3,255,193</b> |
| <b>FUND BALANCE</b>   | <b>\$(99,699)</b>  |

## LOREN WARBOYS UNSUNG HEROES

Each year the Youth Law Center honors people in our community and across the country who have made extraordinary contributions to improve the lives of at-risk youth in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems.



### UN Sung HEROES 2003

**Karen de Sá.** Ms. de Sá is an investigative reporter for the *San Jose Mercury News* whose reports on juvenile delinquency and child welfare systems have resulted in major improvements for at-risk children.

**Judith Goodhand.** Ms. Goodhand is a consultant with the Annie E. Casey Foundation and a former child welfare administrator who has developed model approaches to child welfare that have been adopted throughout the country.

**Dr. Theresa McCrae.** Dr. McCrae is a professor of biology at San Joaquin Delta Community College who has been instrumental in giving support and mentoring to her students.

**Flora Watson.** Ms. Watson is a parent who helped organize a successful campaign to close Tallulah, an abusive and brutal juvenile prison in Louisiana.

**Alba Witkin.** Mrs. Witkin oversees the Bernard E. & Alba Witkin Charitable Trust and has been a long-time contributor and supporter to the Youth Law Center and other children's organizations.

### UN Sung HEROES 2004

**Kenneth E. Barnes, Sr.** Mr. Barnes is the founder of Reaching Out to Others Together (ROOT), a non-profit organization committed to advocacy, education and intervention on behalf of individuals and families of murder victims.

**Reverend Norman Copeland.** Reverend Copeland, the Presiding Elder of the Southern California Los Angeles District of the AME Church, was a founder and leader of Faith Communities for Families and Children.

**Richard D. Pfeiffer, Esq.** Mr. Pfeiffer is an attorney representing children and families involved in the child welfare system.

**Scott Stitham.** Mr. Stitham is a foster parent and advocate for foster youth who has been instrumental in uncovering abusive practices in facilities serving youth.

**Richard Rosenbaum, Esq.** Mr. Rosenbaum served as *pro bono* appellate counsel to Lionel Tate, a 12 year-old boy who was sentenced to life without parole for the death of a six year old.

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